

Jett Moxley, Sexual Assault Crisis Services with YWCA New Britain

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

*H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.

Good evening, my name is Jett Moxley and I am the LGBTQ+ Advocate at YWCA New Britain. We are the sexual assault crisis services for Hartford and parts of Tolland County offering a 24/7 hotline, counseling, accompaniment as well as prevention education and trainings for the largest area in CT, including where this court is. I am writing in very strong support of the provision in the Governor's proposal in H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.to enhance funding for victim service providers.

This funding provision is a direct result of the devastating loss of Victim of Crimes Act Funds (VOCA) that support our work supporting victims of sexual violence. VOCA funding, generated from federal criminal fines and fees, is at an all-time low due to an issue that redirected those fines and fees to the General Treasury for the past few years. In July, President Biden signed into law a measure that will correct this problem, and national experts expect the VOCA Fund should replenish in approximately two years. It is anticipated the two-year loss of funds will create a 50% cut to victim services for Connecticut.

VOCA funds ensure victims have access to support, counseling, advocacy, and help to navigate the complex criminal justice system and provide systems of care for victims and survivors of crime, including crisis interventions in the immediate aftermath of the crime.

Without these funds we would be forced to scrape the bottom of an already far too often empty barrel to offer our clients lifesaving services. We are able to see a survivor of sexual assault through a variety of things they need from hotline support to hospital and police accompaniment to one-on-one counseling support, not to mention the work we do to offer community education to hopefully make the next survivor not have to go through this terrible trauma. Covid has seen a 10% increase in child sexual abuse and an ever-increasing volume of calls a loss of services will be devastating for the people of CT.

Just last month I was able to get a teenager bars to protect their bedroom window, where their perpetrator entered previously, from the same funding that would be removed in this cut. I can't imagine how that family would be able to continue without that small help and this is just one of countless similar stories that we see every week.

I urge you to support the Governor's use of ARPA funds to ensure that the loss of VOCA funds does not harm the often-silent victims in our state. We have seen firsthand the effects of the pandemic on our clients, and we must be able to continue to work with them to foster healing both with themselves and our communities. The long-term effects of sexual trauma are devastating to the people who experience it, who are statistically people who don't have the power and means to support their own needs. The sooner a survivor can start working on their healing the better it can be long term, and what we can all lose by losing years of support for these people as a community will be unmeasurable. Survivors of sexual trauma are all around us, in our homes, places of work, places of worship...It affects all of us.

We would love to offer you a tour of our facilities at the YWCA to show you what we do in our community and the change we are able to bring.

Thank you very much for your service to victims of crime, and victims of sexual violence, in Connecticut.

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